

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES***Congo**

In view of the events which have occurred in the Congo, the ICRC attempted to have the hostages at Kisangani released. On July 12, 1967 its special delegation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo endeavoured to contact the commanding officer of the forces controlling the town, in order to arrange a temporary cease-fire to allow the speedy evacuation of civilians and wounded, and generally speaking to save the greatest possible number of human lives, irrespective of race and nationality.

The President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lieutenant-General Joseph Mobutu, pledged the full support of the Congolese government for this emergency operation. The ICRC used a plane clearly marked with the Red Cross emblem.

On July 13 1967, the mission, consisting of Dr. Simon Burkhardt, head of the Swiss medical team in Kinshasa, another doctor and a Swiss male nurse, landed at Kisangani (ex-Stanleyville). They found that a number of soldiers of the Congolese National Army were in need of immediate treatment and had them evacuated.

Foreign newspaper correspondents and students and teaching staff of the university were being held in Kisangani. The plane took off the same day for Kinshasa. Aboard were thirty wounded soldiers of the Congolese National Army and a number of women and children.

In three days and extremely difficult conditions the special mission of the ICRC succeeded in evacuating 562 persons of whom several hundred were foreign nationals who had been cut off for nearly ten days in Kisangani. Two transport aircraft displaying the red cross emblem and a C-130 type aircraft placed at the disposal of the Congolese Government by the Government of the USA were used for the evacuation. About a hundred wounded

Congolese military were evacuated as a matter of urgency. Amongst foreign nationals brought to the Congolese capital were some journalists and nationals of the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Kenya, Pakistan, Portugal, Tanzania, Uganda and the United States.

The Congolese Government gave its full support to this operation which was also given active help by the ambassadors of the United States, Belgium and Switzerland, and all their staff.

The evacuees were met on arrival in Kinshasa by the Congolese Red Cross, several official and private bodies, Catholic and Protestant missions and the Salvation Army. The wounded brought back from Kisangani were immediately taken to the Lovanium clinic and the Danish hospital.

Nigeria

Strife having broken out in Nigeria, humanitarian action was undertaken by the ICRC. On July 11, 1967, at the request of its delegate general in Africa, Mr. Georg Hoffmann, then in Lagos, the International Committee despatched two standard assortments of medicines and bandages by air, one for the Nigerian Red Cross in Lagos and the other to that Society's branch at Enugu. Further consignments were made based on information supplied to the ICRC by its delegates at present in Nigeria.

On July 17, Dr. Altwegg left for Biafra to second Mr. Hoffmann. He took with him half a ton of medical supplies. Later, Dr. Pidermann also left Switzerland for Lagos.

Subsequently arrangements were made with the Swiss Red Cross for two medical teams, each comprising a surgeon, and two male nurses, to be ready to give their services.

Laos

The situation of several provinces of Laos is still unstable and many civilians have sought refuge in the Mekong Valley.

The Lao Red Cross is therefore continuing its distributions of relief supplies helped by the International Committee of the Red Cross delegate, Dr. Jürg Baer. Thanks to funds from several

National Red Cross Societies, the Women's Committee of the Lao Red Cross and Dr. Baer distributed in the beginning of June twenty tons of rice in the Sayaboury province some eighty miles West of Vientiane, a famine-stricken area.

More than 14,000 people received a ration of this staple commodity. Several had walked 35 miles for a kg. of rice, to mix it with roots and leaves. Starving and exhausted, their condition is alarming. Clothing is also lacking.

Further North, in the Houa-Khong province, bordering Burma and Thailand, straw mats, blankets and mosquito-nets have been distributed.

The situation in Southern Laos is still serious and the President of the National Society, Dr. Oudom Souvannavong, went there at the beginning of last month to organize rice distribution.

Dr. Baer has now returned to Switzerland, having been relieved by Mr. Robert Jenny.

Greece

Last month Mr. Germain Colladon, ICRC delegate, returned to Athens to continue his mission to political detainees held since the events of April. He was again granted every facility for this new series of visits to detainees, including those on Youra island, where, of more than 6,000 persons arrested and interned, there still remain some 1,800 persons.

On June 30, 259 persons detained at Gyaros were released. The ICRC delegate was present during their passage to the port of Scaramanga, from where they were able to return home.

The ICRC delegate gave special attention to arrangements for the care of children who had been separated from their mothers or both parents. Some of them have been taken in by relatives or neighbours. Others have been found places in orphanages and holiday camps.